

Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo
January 27, 2012

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Expert Resource Bank Project Proposal

Action Item Calendar

Today (January 27): Distribute [letter to teachers](#) and principals

Today (January 27): Distribute invitation to RIDE webinar on [ESEA flexibility](#)

Wednesday (February 1): [Green Ribbon Schools](#) nomination deadline

Wednesday (February 1): [Personal Literacy Plan](#) data-submission deadline

February 3: Registration deadline for conference on [Innovation Powered by Technology](#)

February 15: Distribute to teachers link to evaluation survey (see below)

June 30: Schools and districts submit [final personnel assignments](#)

Notes from Commissioner Gist:

1. Registrations for Innovation Powered by Technology conference due February 3

We have received an enthusiastic response to our announcement about our conference on Innovation Powered by Technology. I am very enthusiastic about the possibilities that technology offers for improving instruction and advancing student achievement. We have a great opportunity to move forward with these innovations – and our conference on Innovation Powered by Technology will begin a statewide conversation on this exciting initiative.

I hope that you have selected a team from your LEA to participate in this conference on Saturday, February 11, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., at Rhode Island College. We are fortunate that some of the national leaders on technology and education will join us as well to share their knowledge and expertise. The national speakers include:

- Anthony Kim, founder and CEO of Education Elements;
- Michael Horn, co-author of *Disrupting Class*;
- Jeff Mao, Learning Technology Director at the Maine Department of Education;
- Allison Powell, of the International Association for K-12 Online Learning;
- Tom Vander Ark, founder of GettingSmart.com; and
- Bob Wise, president of the Alliance for Excellent Education and the former Governor of West Virginia

As I noted to you last week, the conference has a limited number of open spots, so we are requiring preregistration. Preregistration closes next Friday, February 3, so please register as soon as possible. We have posted registration information here:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/OMP/VL/TechOps/1to1/2012conference.aspx>

2. *Reminder: Business leaders offering consulting services to districts; response requested by February 3*

As I shared in my January 13 field memo, RIDE will be working with the business community to match school leaders with business leaders in our state in order to support relevant district projects, at no cost to the district. I have attached to this Field Memo a form to complete if you have a project in your district that would benefit from complimentary business consulting. Possible areas for this Expert Resource Bank Project might include leadership coaching, human-capital systems, infrastructure, communications, or strategic planning. The time commitment from the business expert for this project could range from a few hours to a few days. If you are interested in following up on this opportunity, please e-mail your completed form to nicole.shaffer@ride.ri.gov by February 3.

3. RIDE schedules webinar for teachers on educator evaluations

I am very pleased that all districts are moving forward successfully with the gradual implementation of educator evaluations. These evaluations will be a vital resource in our continuing efforts to improve teaching and learning in all of our schools.

As part of our commitment to keeping the entire education field well informed about our ongoing work on evaluations, we have partnered NEARI and RIFTHP to co-host a webinar for teachers on educator evaluation in Rhode Island, to be held on **Wednesday** (February 1) from 3 to 4:30 p.m. We have communicated with teachers about this webinar, and please feel free to let the teachers in your district know about this opportunity:

What: RIDE webinar for teachers on educator evaluations

When: Wednesday (February 1), from 3 – 4:30 p.m.

[Click here to register](#). Once you register, you will automatically receive the information you'll need to participate on Wednesday. This webinar will present the latest updates on the implementation educator-evaluation systems in our state.

Please contact Melissa Cabral for more information, at Melissa.Cabral@ride.ri.gov

4. Hearing scheduled on statewide anti-bullying policy

One of our priorities as educators is to ensure that all of our schools are safe and secure places for teaching and learning. Over the past several years, we at RIDE have worked closely with you and your colleagues to ensure that all LEAs have policies in place to prevent bullying and to train staff members about how to respond to reports of bullying. We are proud that Rhode Island has been a leading state in taking on the issue of bullying and student safety.

Now, as a result of legislation that the General Assembly passed last year, we are moving our anti-bullying work to a new stage, as we are developing a statewide policy on the prevention of bullying. As part of this initiative, we have scheduled a public hearing on proposed anti-bullying regulations, to be held on Monday, February 6, at 5 p.m., here at RIDE (Room 260). I encourage you to come to this hearing to share your views on the statewide anti-bullying policy and to share this information with your school community. The Secretary of State has posted a notice of the public hearing:

http://sos.ri.gov/documents/archives/regdocs/holding/DOE/RI_Statewide_Bullying_Policy.pdf

From RIDE:

5. RIDE to hold workshops on Common Core State Standards

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

RIDE will be offering two open-registration Study of the Common Core State Standards sessions next month. Study of the Common Core State Standards is a one-day workshop introducing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in either English language arts or mathematics. The goal of the workshop is for participants to have a shared understanding of the structure and purpose of the CCSS. In addition, participants learn two tools for instructional alignment with the CCSS.

Study of the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and a Study of the Common Core State Standards in mathematics will both be held on February 16. Sessions will occur at the Northern Rhode Island Collaborative, 640 George Washington Highway, Lincoln. Session registration is limited to 35 participants per workshop on a first-come, first-served basis. Registration and additional workshop details are available at:

<https://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopReg/main.aspx>.

Please contact Kate Schulz, at kate.schulz@ride.ri.gov or 222-8489, if you have any questions.

6. U.S. Department of Education posts reports on Year 1 of Race to the Top

Please see this message from our Race to the Top team:

On January 10, the U.S. Department of Education released reports on the Year 1 progress of each Race to the Top-winning state. Overall, the [Rhode Island report](#) praises our accomplishments and conveys confidence that we will be able to overcome challenges in the areas where more work is needed. The report acknowledges that we greatly increased our statewide capacity to implement Race to the Top and that we laid

the foundation necessary to bring each project to scale in the upcoming grant years. Some highlights among our Year 1 accomplishments include training educators in the Common Core State Standards, beginning to implement educator evaluations, and launching the induction program for new teachers. The challenges that this report identifies are related to transforming our lowest-achieving schools and to bringing high-performing charter public schools to Rhode Island. This week, the Rhode Island Race to the Top Annual Performance Report [Data Display page](#) went live on the U.S. Department of Education website. This page reflects the data that we submitted regarding the implementation progress we made in Year 1 of Race to the Top.

7. RIDE to hold informational meeting for all districts on Educator Performance and Support System

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

All Rhode Island educator-evaluation systems integrate multiple sources of information to guide educators in the development of professional goals and to paint a fair, accurate, and comprehensive picture of educator effectiveness. These sources of evidence will generate data, qualitative as well as quantitative, that need to be stored, managed, and made available to users at all times. To that end, RIDE is developing a computer-based system known as the Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS) for districts to use.

This system will provide an easy-to-use interface to collect and manage data on all three components of the evaluation system – Student Learning, Professional Practice, and Professional Responsibility.

In addition, the EPSS system will allow users to manage the activities related to the evaluation process, such as scheduling observations and conferences, 2-way communication between evaluators and educators, and the EPSS will also provide tools for self-assessment, observations, professional goal-writing, and student-learning objectives.

The system will be designed to address the needs of users at all levels: individual educator, school, district, and state.

During the first couple of weeks in February, RIDE will be engaging in a series of targeted feedback sessions with early-adopter evaluation-model districts, and we will also be facilitating an all-district informational meeting with district leaders and IT staff. This informational meeting will include a detailed overview of the EPSS system and how it will integrate with other key applications, system development and training timelines, and information about how districts can be involved in ongoing feedback sessions throughout the spring and the next school year. More detailed information about participating in the EPSS informational meeting will be circulated to district leaders next week.

8. RIDE to celebrate Digital Learning

Please see this notice from our Office of Multiple Pathways:

Digital Learning Day (Wednesday, February 1) kicks off a national awareness campaign on digital learning. The initiative is designed to celebrate innovative teachers and to highlight instructional practices that strengthen teaching and personalize learning for all students. All are welcome to participate in this celebration of innovation by signing up at:

<http://www.digitallearningday.org>.

We will be celebrating digital learning in Rhode Island at our February 11 Innovation Powered by Technology conference, and we are very excited that Bob Wise, president of the Alliance for Excellent Education, which is spearheading the Digital Learning Day initiative, will be one of our national guest speakers!:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/OMP/VL/TechOps/1to1/2012conference.aspx>

You can see Edutopia's Digital Learning Day resources, at:

<http://www.edutopia.org/digital-learning-technology-resources>.

These resources include interesting and teacher-friendly videos, helpful hints, and new tools and materials on:

[Integrating Technology into Schools](#)
[Online Learning and Blended Classrooms](#)
[Teaching with New Media Tools](#)
[Working with Digital Learners](#)
[Additional Resources on the Web](#)

9. Teacher survey on educator evaluations is on line – *Action Item*

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

RIDE has developed an online survey for teachers implementing the Rhode Island Model Educator Evaluation System. The survey will ask teachers questions about their experiences with the Rhode Island Model, as well as about their perspective on evaluation systems in general. We have been collecting feedback from teachers in our two early-adopter districts (Jamestown and Warwick), and this survey will help us capture a broader perspective. Responses to this survey will help us understand how practitioners experience evaluation and how the Rhode Island Model Educator Evaluation System can be improved. The link for the survey is below, and we are asking all superintendents/heads of school to share the survey with their teachers. The deadline for completing the teacher survey is Wednesday, February 22:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RI_Model_Teacher_Survey.

10. RIDE to offer summer academies for evaluation training

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

RIDE will be hosting rigorous training academies over the course of the 2012 summer for Personnel Evaluating Building Administrators and for Personnel Evaluating Teachers. Academies will build on the 2011-12 evaluation training modules. Below are descriptions of the Rhode Island Model-focused academies:

Academy for Personnel Evaluating Teachers: Four-day rigorous training (9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. each day) seeking to prepare personnel evaluating teachers to accurately observe and rate practice, lead professional feedback conversations, set and approve Student Learning Objectives, and engage with the Educator Performance and Support System.

Academy for Personnel Evaluating Building Administrators: Three-day rigorous training (9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. each day) seeking to prepare personnel evaluating building administrators to conduct effective school visits and accurately rate performance, lead professional feedback conversations, approve schoolwide Student Learning Objectives, and engage with the Educator Performance and Support System.

Please note that both academies will be offered multiple times between the second week of July and the end of August. A limited number of make-up academies will be offered during September. Specific dates, locations, and registration information for both academies will be shared in an upcoming Field Memo.

11. Module 3 and Module 4 trainings for evaluators to begin in March

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

Module 3 for Personnel Evaluating Building Administrators is being offered eight times between March 6 and April 11. Module 4 for Personnel Evaluating Teachers is being offered 28 times between March 12 and April 25. Both trainings will focus on preparing for End-of-Year Conferences. Evaluators can register by going to the eRIDE Workshop calendar, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/ridecalendar.aspx>.

12. Schools urged to seek parent responses to SurveyWorks; student, teacher/staff administrator surveys begin next week

Please see the following announcement from our Office of Data, Analysis, and Research:

Please remember that the student, teacher/staff, and administrator SurveyWorks surveys all begin next week and that the parent survey is still underway. We are striving this year to achieve much higher response rates on the parent survey than we had last year, particularly in our urban communities. With more than two weeks still to go, we are pleased to report that we have already received more parent-survey responses statewide than we did in all of last year. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the Thornton School, in Johnston, which has the highest response rate in the state, so far. We would also like to acknowledge the following schools in urban communities, all of which have among the highest response rates in the state: the Citizens Memorial School and Bernon Heights School, in Woonsocket; the Young & Woods Elementary School, in Providence; and the Curvin-McCabe School and Virginia Cunningham School, in Pawtucket.

Thank you again for all of your efforts to make SurveyWorks a success. If you have any questions or would like more information, please visit www.surveyworks.ride.ri.gov or contact Jan Mermin, at 222-4710 or jan.mermin@ride.ri.gov.

13. RIDE develops resources to help teachers, principals with roster verification

Please see this notice from our Division of Educator Excellence and Instructional Effectiveness:

In preparation for the Roster Verification (RV) process that will begin next week (February 2), RIDE has developed the following resources to support teachers and principals in completing their RV responsibilities (applies only to ELA and mathematics contributing educators for grades 3 through 7 and their principals):

45 minute teacher training video:

www.eride.ri.gov/rosterverification/teachertrainingvideo/

Teacher user guide:

www.eride.ri.gov/RosterVerification/RosterVerification_UserGuide.pdf

Flyer for teachers with an overview of the RV process and links to key resources:

www.eride.ri.gov/RosterVerification/RosterVerification_TeacherFlyer.pdf

Principal user guide:

www.eride.ri.gov/RosterVerification/RosterVerification_UserGuide_PrincipalVersion.pdf

Recording of one of the principal webinars:

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/RosterVerification/PrincipalWebinar.wmv>

The final principal-training webinar will held on **Tuesday** (January 31) , from 3 – 4:30 p.m. Principals can register at:

<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/852318838>.

For additional clarifications or assistance, please e-mail the RIDE Roster Verification team, at: rosterverification@ride.ri.gov

14. High schools offered opportunity to sign up for National Student Clearinghouse research tool

Please see the following notice from the Office of Data, Analysis, and Research:

A flyer has been released announcing an opportunity for no-cost accounts with the National Student Clearinghouse's student-outcome research tool. The flyer has been posted on the our website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/DataWorks/documents/STHSchoolFlyer.pdf>.

Please forward this information as appropriate. If you have any questions, please contact Peg Votta, at 222-8412 pr margaret.votta@ride.ri.gov.

From the U.S. Department of Education:

15. President Obama highlights education issues in State of the Union Address

The Office of Communications and Outreach provides these excerpts from President Obama's address:

On teachers:

At a time when other countries are doubling down on education, tight budgets have forced states to lay off thousands of teachers. We know a good teacher can increase the lifetime income of a classroom by over \$250,000. A great teacher can offer an escape from poverty to a child who dreams beyond his circumstances. Every person in this chamber can point to a teacher who changed the trajectory of their lives. Most teachers work tirelessly, with modest pay, sometimes digging in their own pocket for school supplies, just to make a difference. Teachers matter. So, instead of bashing them or defending the status quo, let's offer schools a deal. Give them the resources to keep good teachers on the job, and reward the best ones. In return, grant schools flexibility: to teach with creativity and passion; to stop teaching to the test; and to replace teachers who just aren't helping kids learn.

On dropouts:

We also know that when students don't walk away from their education, more of them walk the stage to get their diploma. So, tonight, I am proposing that every state requires that all students stay in high school until they graduate or turn 18.

16. Districts encouraged to participate in FAFSA Completion Project

Please see this letter from the Chief Operating Officer for Federal Student Aid:

In 2010, the U. S. Department of Education (the Department) implemented a FAFSA Completion Project designed to assist local educational agencies (LEAs) and secondary-school administrators in determining which of their students have completed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for the upcoming school year. FAFSA-completion information provided under the FAFSA Completion Project can be helpful to LEAs and secondary schools in implementing targeted outreach efforts to assist their high-school seniors and their families who have not yet submitted a FAFSA or who submitted a FAFSA that may be incomplete. As you know, completing the FAFSA can be a critical component of access to postsecondary education.

Since the FAFSA Completion Project's initial implementation, as a pilot with 20 participants, the Department has received requests from other LEAs and secondary schools to expand the project. In response to these requests, the Department has established a process, as outlined in this letter, that will allow an additional 80 multiple-high school LEAs to participate in the project and to obtain FAFSA-completion data for their students for the 2012-13 FAFSA processing year that began on January 1. The expansion also will include an additional 12 single-high school LEAs. Those single-high school LEAs will be provided an opportunity to participate under a separate letter that will be forthcoming.

The FAFSA Completion Project allows multi-high school LEAs to access FAFSA completion data for high-school seniors in their district. Each participating multi-high school LEA will choose one person from the LEA's staff to access FAFSA-completion data from the applicable Department system. LEAs will submit, via the web, directory information (name, date of birth, and zip code) of the seniors for whom the LEA would like to obtain FAFSA-completion information. Each LEA will provide a secure, downloadable file to the Department, with identifiers for each of their seniors, and, in return, the Department will respond with student-specific FAFSA-completion data. Specifically, information will be provided indicating whether the student had submitted a FAFSA and, if so, whether that initial submission was complete or not. This information will allow the LEA (and its secondary schools) to focus counseling services on assisting seniors to successfully complete and submit a FAFSA.

To participate in the FAFSA Completion Project, a multi-high school LEA must have software and hardware compatible with the Department's systems, as described below:

- IBM or fully IBM-compatible PC with a 1.2 GHz processor
- 512 MB RAM memory
- 60 GB hard drive
- Windows-compatible keyboard and mouse
- SVGA graphics adapter capable of 800 X 600 screen resolution or higher
- 56 kbps analog modem using V.90 and an Internet service
- Windows 2000 Professional or Windows XP Home or Professional
- Provider (ISP) or a direct connection to the Internet

No federal funds are available for establishing the technical capability to receive FAFSA-completion data or for any other aspect of this project.

In addition to the technical requirements, each multi-high school LEA applying to participate in the FAFSA Completion Project must:

Have at least two high schools in their district

For evaluation purposes, agree to a staggered rollout of FAFSA-completion data in which half of their high schools would be randomly assigned by the Department to have access to FAFSA data the first year that the technical and counseling components are in place, with the remaining half receiving access a year later. The purpose of this staggered implementation is to establish an experimental group and a control group about whom we will collect data to measure the effectiveness and impact of the counseling efforts that are implemented at the local level.

Agree to participate in a national evaluation of the project. As part of the evaluation, a Department-sponsored evaluator will independently obtain data on financial-aid receipt and college enrollment for seniors in both sets of schools – those assigned to receive access to FAFSA-completion data and those that do not receive the FAFSA data. The evaluator may also survey a sample of students or counselors in the district about their experiences.

Enroll with the Department's access and security system, and agree to comply with security and privacy guidelines for protecting information.

Provide directory information, to the extent it is consistent with the relevant provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and implementing regulations (20 U.S.C. 1232g and 34 CFR Part 99), initially for seniors in both sets of high schools and then, on an as-needed basis, for those students for whom they wish to obtain FAFSA-completion data. In order for a participating entity to provide directory information to the Department, it must have provided public notice that it has designated as directory information under FERPA the student's name, address, and date of birth. In addition, in accordance with FERPA, if any students or their parents have opted out of the disclosure of this student-directory information, the LEA will neither provide directory information on those students to the Department nor request FAFSA-completion data on them.

Multiple-high school LEAs that are interested in participating in the FAFSA Completion Project for the 2012-13 FAFSA filing year, and that meet the technical and evaluation requirements, should send an e-mail to Dena Bates, at FAFSACompletion@ed.gov. Please include in the subject line "FAFSA Completion Project." The e-mail should include the name of the LEA and the name, position, e-mail address, and phone number(s) of a primary contact person. Requests to participate in the FAFSA Completion Project must be received no later than March 2. At the end of this period, entities will be chosen to participate in the FAFSA Completion Project through a standard randomized process.

We appreciate your interest and your cooperation in this matter. We have posted a copy of this letter on our website at the following address:

www.FSA4counselors.ed.gov. Answers to anticipated questions regarding this letter will be posted to that site shortly. If you have further questions about this letter, please contact Dena Bates, at FAFSACompletion@ed.gov.

Other:

17. Grant available to teachers through safety video/poster contest

Please see this notice from the Injury Prevention Center at Rhode Island Hospital:

The 2012 Safety is NO Accident video/poster contest planning committee is thrilled to announce that this year we will be awarding a \$500 grant to the teacher who mentors the most entries to the contest. The grant can be used at the teacher's discretion to buy supplies for her or his classroom. Information about the contest and entry forms are available on our website:

www.ipc.rhodeislandhospital.org.

Please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions, at safetyisNOAccident2012@gmail.com

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>